

17 December 1971

MEMORANDUM

- SUBJECT: 1. Mid-1970 Sighting of Four Captured American Pilots
in a North Vietnamese Commo-Liaison Station About
25 Kilometers Northwest of Tchepone
2. Early 1969 Sighting of Two Captured American Pilots
Approximately 15 Kilometers Northwest of Muong Phine

SOURCE: [REDACTED]

SUMMARY: During June or July 1970 four American Caucasian prisoners of war were observed at Commo-Liaison Station 12 near Ban Nam Pha, about 25 kilometers northwest of Tchepone. The prisoners had been captured in South Vietnam and were being taken to North Vietnam. None of the prisoners was wounded, but they were being carried on stretchers because they had suffered injuries to their feet from walking barefoot. All four prisoners were over six feet in height and two of the four wore glasses. Three of the Americans appeared to be in their late twenties or early thirties while the fourth was noticeably older. The prisoners were observed at a distance of three meters. Villagers in the area said it was not uncommon for American prisoners to pass through Commo-Liaison Station 12. Two American prisoners were also observed in early 1969 near Muong Phine. They were being detained in a concealed truck park along Route 23. They were not handcuffed or restrained in any manner and did not appear to be wounded or injured. North Vietnamese soldiers said they were the crew of a jet fighter which had been shot down near Phou Kator.

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
Date: 1 MAY 1971

[REDACTED]

1. [REDACTED]

2. During June or July 1970 four American prisoners were observed in the vicinity of Ban (village) Nam Pha (XD 1170) area approximately 25 kilometers northwest of Tchepone (XD 3245). The Americans and their NVA guards were resting at Commo-Liaison Station (CLS) number 12 at XD 113700.* The American prisoners were observed from a distance of about three meters and [REDACTED] said he tried to speak to them [REDACTED]. They were unable to communicate with him, however, one NVA soldier, who appeared to have a limited English language capability, was seen speaking with the Americans. The NVA guards said that the Americans were pilots who were captured in South Vietnam and were being taken to North Vietnam. The Americans were not wounded but were transported on stretchers because of injuries to their feet suffered as a result of being forced to walk without shoes. The Americans were not handcuffed or restrained when observed and were allowed to walk within the perimeter the NVA guards had established.**

[REDACTED] Comment: The map sheet used [REDACTED] was 6242 IV series L 7015 dated 1968 1:50,000.

**Field Comment: Current enemy Order of Battle (OB) holdings indicate that the prisoners were probably moving north along the infiltration corridor, as stated. The interrogation of two [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] indicates that Commo-Liaison Station 12 is about a three-day walk from the XD 0850 vicinity, thus further substantiating [REDACTED] information.

3. Three of the Americans appeared to be in their late twenties or early thirties while the fourth man was noticeably older and was the tallest of the four men. All four Americans appeared to be over six feet in height and were Caucasians.*

4. Two of the four Americans wore eyeglasses with off-white frames; they were not sunglasses. The apparent elder of the two had brown hair which was not cut in the U.S. military style. He was slightly balding and his hair was turning grey. He had thick eyebrows and a mustache. His shirt was open at the neck and the upper part of his chest was covered with hair. The man had a stocky build and a long curved nose. The second prisoner with glasses appeared to be in his late twenties and his hair, which appeared to be blond in color, had recently been cut and was parted on the right side. He had thin eyebrows and a large adam's apple, but he did not have a beard or mustache. He was of medium build.

5. The four Americans were wearing no jewelry or watches and had no obvious scars or tattoos. They wore identical pants and shirts which were off-white in color and appeared to be made from a material similar to nylon. The shirts had short sleeves and a zipper in the front. The shirts had a pocket on the left side, but no identification tags or insignia markings were observed. The two prisoners who were not wearing glasses appeared to be in their early thirties and had brown hair.**

6. [REDACTED] was in the area of CLS-12 for approximately two hours and observed the American prisoners during much of this time. He did not know where the Americans were taken after they left the CLS, but he had been told by his superiors that all American and Thai prisoners were taken to North Vietnam.

7. CLS-12 was a large NVA headquarters and bivouac area located near an infiltration route to the south. The route was not motorable and was used only by foot traffic. The only Lao nationals who were allowed into the CLS-12 area were local PL political and military cadre. Villagers in the CLS area said that it was not uncommon for American prisoners to pass through CLS-12.

[REDACTED] Comment: [REDACTED] is a fair judge of age, height and weight.

[REDACTED] Comment: [REDACTED] could not recall any additional descriptive features regarding these two prisoners.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

8. After reviewing a Military Assistance Command Vietnam/ Joint Prisoner Recovery Center (MACV/JPRC) publication titled "Photographs of Missing and Captured Personnel in SEA, [REDACTED] said that number 1021, Air Force Major Gene T. Pemberton, bore a strong resemblance to the older of the American prisoners he sighted. He said, however, that the man he observed had a fuller face and was less bald than the man depicted in photograph 1021. He also said that photograph 0304, U.S. Army Specialist 4 James Daniel Williamson, looked similar to the second American prisoner who was wearing eyeglasses, although the man he personally observed had a shorter nose.

9. [REDACTED]

10. During late January 1969 two American prisoners were observed about a one-hour walk south of Ban (village) Mai (probably Nathom Mai, WD 985400), approximately 15 kilometers northwest of Muong Phine (XD 0927). * [REDACTED] observed the American prisoners from a distance of 20 meters and could not provide an accurate description of them. Both men wore single piece uniforms similar to flight suits. They also wore shoes and "fur" hats.

[REDACTED] Comment: The map sheet used was 6142 III, series L7015, 1968.

[REDACTED]

11. The NVA soldiers guarding the prisoners stood about shoulder level to one of the prisoners and came to about the level of the lower part of the ear of the other.* The Americans were not handcuffed or restrained in any manner, but were guarded by ten to 20 NVA soldiers. The Americans did not appear to be wounded or injured. [REDACTED] could only observe the American prisoners for a few minutes because airstrikes were being directed into his general area and he moved out of the strike zone.

12. The Americans were seen at approximately noon and were being detained in a concealed truck park along Route 23. [REDACTED] said he initially did not notice the prisoners and walked 15 meters past the truck park where he met a second group of NVA soldiers. The group's leader told [REDACTED] of the Americans' presence, at which time [REDACTED] turned around and saw the prisoners.

13. [REDACTED] learned from the NVA that the Americans were the crew of an "FF" which had just been shot down.** The crew had ejected from the aircraft before it crashed in the immediate area of Phou (mountain) Kator and the crew had been captured by an NVA element.*** [REDACTED] saw other American aircraft bombing the area where the aircraft had crashed. He did not see the aircraft being shot down, however, nor did he see the pilots parachute from it. [REDACTED] does not know where the Americans were taken after he

[REDACTED] Comment:

[REDACTED] says that the average NVA soldier is as tall as he is.

[REDACTED] Comment: "FF" is a term used by the PL and the NVA for a jet fighter.

** [REDACTED] Comment: Phou Kator is probably Phou Katot located at XD 0241. A Phou Katon is also located at XD 1350.

[REDACTED]

left the area. *

14. When [REDACTED] reviewed a MACV/JPRC publication titled "Photographs of Missing and Captured Personnel in SEA," he could identify no photographs in the book as the individuals he observed near Ban Mai. He also could not identify photographs of Singleton or Utley.

[REDACTED] Comment: [REDACTED] may have been referring to the crash of an F4E aircraft on 26 January 1969. The last known position of the aircraft was XD 297373. Daniel Everett Singleton, accession number 00001099, and Russell Keith Utley, accession number 00001161, were on board. On 31 October 1971 photography no evidence of a crash site was found. The area has been bombed, has heavy tree canopy, and there is row cropping in the area. Inasmuch as the aircraft was probably camouflaged, it probably would not be observable because of the time lag between the date of the crash and the date of photography.